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Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Message to the head of the Lord's Resistance Army delegation to the Juba peace talks through a public statement by the Chairman of the Working Group to be transmitted by the Special Envoy for the areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army

At the 9th meeting of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, held on 19 July 2007 in connection with its consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Uganda (S/2007/260), the Chairman made the following statement on behalf of the Working Group, to be transmitted by the Special Envoy for the areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA):

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

1. *Calls the attention* of the head of the LRA delegation to the Juba peace talks to the fact that the Security Council has received a report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Uganda, dated 7 May 2007 (S/2007/260), underlining the absence of any concrete signs regarding the release of children associated with LRA;

2. *Strongly condemns* the continuous recruitment and use of child soldiers and all other violations and abuses committed by LRA;

3. *Notes* the International Criminal Court indictments against members of the LRA leadership on charges of, among other things, the enlistment of children through abduction, as a war crime;

4. *Strongly reaffirms* that the release of children cannot be made dependent upon the conclusion of a peace agreement;

5. *Urges LRA*:

(a) To take immediate steps to release children associated with its forces;

(b) To immediately engage in transparent procedures with the United Nations Children's Fund for verification of the demobilization of all children;

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(c) To provide humanitarian personnel with immediate unimpeded access to populations in need;

(d) To ensure that specific provisions for children are included by the parties at all steps of the negotiations, bearing in mind the importance of holding accountable perpetrators of violations and abuses committed against children;

6. *Strongly urges* LRA to respond positively to this message and to take serious follow-up actions.